



## STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING  
*P.O. Box 40970, Olympia, Washington 98504-0970*  
*(360) 725-4665 • FAX (360) 413-3482*

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Dear Early Learning Leaders,

Since my last newsletter, we've been hard at work laying the foundation for a strong Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT – ELC) proposal. With the preliminary guidelines, we've honed our focus for the grant, continued to gather feedback from our partners, and begun the research and data analyses necessary for the final grant. With these efforts, we continue to be heartened by and grateful for all the support and enthusiasm many of you have offered.

We also have great news to share! We have been selected to receive technical assistance with our grant strategy and application from the Early Learning Challenge Collaborative (ELCC), led by the First Five Years Fund and the BUILD Initiative. Through the Collaborative, we will be able to access focused, one-on-one support from national experts. Read on for more on this and our other efforts.

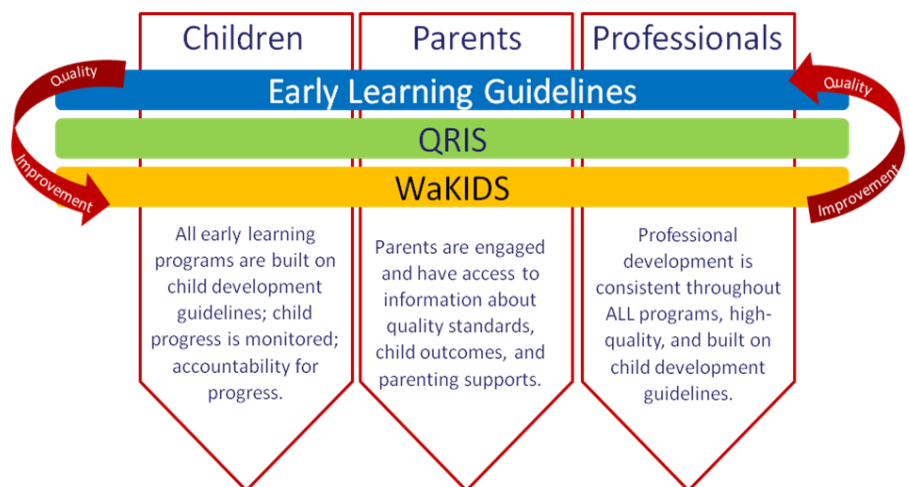
### Focusing our Strategy

In my last letter, I described how we are aligning the [2011 priorities](#) for the Early Learning Partnership from our Early Learning Plan, into a framework that helps us move from components of quality into a system of quality. We then "mapped" these with the RTT – ELC preliminary guidelines to better understand where we might focus our grant strategy to produce the strongest application possible.

The framework we created includes four pillars needed to create lasting outcomes for children: Leadership and Governance, System Alignment, Integrated Services, and Accountability. Three key strategies within this framework stand out in terms of their alignment with RTT – ELC and our key priorities: the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS), the Washington State Early Learning Guidelines, and the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). These core strategies reach across programs with consistent mechanisms to improve quality, track progress, and measure child outcomes. They also benefit children, parents and early learning professionals alike. While we are in early implementation of WaKIDS and QRIS, RTT – ELC offers a great opportunity to speed up implementation and serve more children as quickly as possible.

### Reaching Out for Advice

We rounded out our series of small group meetings with a discussion this week on home visiting. We focused on how home visiting efforts in this area might intersect with the grant strategy. This input, along with that from the small group meetings we convened last month and ongoing input we receive, will help shape both our grant strategy specifically and our work moving forward overall.



## Doing Our Homework

While honing the grant strategy, we've also started to delve more deeply into several tasks that will be important for the grant application:

- **Technical Assistance:** As I noted at the beginning of this letter, we are pleased and excited to be selected for national technical assistance. This will begin immediately and will focus on three areas for which we requested assistance:
  1. **Scaling Up QRIS:** We want to build on the accomplishments of the field test and current implementation plan. To do this, we need additional assistance addressing some of the complexities associated with scaling the model. This will include cost-modeling to ensure that we know what it takes to support top-rated facilities from day one. This information will be used to build our larger strategy to go to scale.
  2. **Developing Performance Metrics:** We want to make sure we clearly define what progress looks like and have requested assistance to develop performance metrics for our RTT – ELC State Plan.
  3. **Strategic Use of Resources:** We want to be smart in thinking about how build a sustainable budget that maximizes our existing resources at multiple levels that will be integrated into our RTT – ELC State Plan.
- **Finance and Data Needs:** We know that data will be critical, both to make our case with the grant, and to operationalize and measure our work, as will having a strong budget and resource plan. We have engaged consultants with deep expertise in these areas who are helping us to scope out these pieces. By the time the final grant guidelines are released, we expect to have a robust structure for these to include in the application.
- **Support Letters:** We will need to have support letters from all key partners that are specific, tailored and committed. Collectively, the letters must reflect broad concerted support for our State Plan. To this end, we have begun reaching out to key partners to flesh out accomplishments to highlight and how each can stand in support of these efforts. We are appreciative of the positive energy we have received thus far, and look forward to more on this. We would love to hear from you or your organization if you are interested in helping with a support letter. Please email [RTT-ELC@del.wa.gov](mailto:RTT-ELC@del.wa.gov).

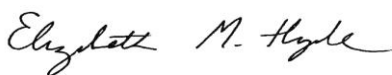
## Looking Ahead

We now anticipate the final RTT-ELC guidelines will be released at the end of this month. We will continue to steam ahead with the foundational tasks we've begun. Once the guidelines are out, we will have several key tasks:

- **Advisory Group:** We'll be convening this group again to share details about the proposal we're developing and to seek the group's feedback.
- **Finalizing Grant Strategy and Writing:** We will spend most of August taking the ideas we've learned from group meetings and feedback we get at [RTT-ELC@del.wa.gov](mailto:RTT-ELC@del.wa.gov) to write the proposal.
- **Review:** We will ask a small group of people to review the proposal and provide feedback on two key questions: 1) Does this proposal build upon and support the early learning plan and the work that we are doing in Washington? and 2) How does the proposal line up against the federal guidelines for the application? This feedback will inform our finalizing of the application.

I'd like to again express my thanks for all your support and contributions as we move forward with the proposal. Please continue to let us know what you think, and any suggestions that you have at [RTT-ELC@del.wa.gov](mailto:RTT-ELC@del.wa.gov) and continue to check our [webpage](#) for new information.

Sincerely,



Bette M. Hyde, Ph.D  
Director